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TAGS: EFIN KDEM PGOV PINR PINS PREL AU SU
SUBJECT: SPECIAL ENVOY GRATION MEETING WITH GOSS VICE
PRESIDENT RIEK MACHAR

Classified By: CDA Robert E. Whitehead for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶11. (c) Special Envoy (SE) Scott Gration met Government of South Sudan (GOSS) Vice President Riek Machar on August 20. Machar spoke at length about the political dynamic between the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and its partner in the Government of National Unity (GONU), the National Congress Party (NCP). Machar also offered his views on the ongoing implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), insisting that the SPLM in principle recognizes the need for national elections. He also briefly discussed the SPLM role in Darfur and addressed the key GOSS issues of finance and security. He addressed the continued problems caused by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in the South. End summary.

Proper Approach to the NCP

¶12. (c) Machar opened the meeting by addressing SPLM relations with its putative NCP partner, noting that the NCP takes what it can but gives back little in return. He said that sanctions provide the SPLM a good tool to pressure the NCP, but that despite all the sanctions the economy of the North was still thriving. How, he asked, can the US unwind sanctions in a way that will encourage the NCP to be more forthcoming? He cautioned that Khartoum needs to feel pressure and that any relief on sanctions must provide the NCP a real incentive to implement the CPA and move on Darfur. Change needed to come from Khartoum, not Juba, he stated, and the SPLM still saw sanctions as good leverage on Khartoum. He suggested that the US discuss in advance with the SPLM any unwinding of sanctions, since the right weapon used at the right time could yield the right results.

¶13. (c) He continued that he had encouraged his SPLM colleagues not to attach too much importance to current internal NCP differences, since the NCP inevitably survived its rifts. Turning to NCP personalities, Machar commented that if Bashir wants to implement any genuine democratic reforms, he will need Vice President Taha in place. An attempt to oust Taha would likely push Taha into Turabi's camp. Machar continued that Taha knew how to persuade Bashir even in the face of resistance from the very powerful Nafie Ali Nafie: Nafie talked a lot, but Taha had shown he can deliver results. He said that he believed that former NISS Director General Salah Ghosh would be active behind the scenes in spite of his recent demotion to presidential advisor.

¶ 14. (c) Machar said that the two parties had resolved most contentious CPA issues but remained stuck on the two big ones -- the census and referenda -- because Khartoum was dragging its feet. VP Taha had already made it clear that he was not prepared to move on democratic transformation of laws. The North-South border issue was stuck in committee, Machar noted, and the GOSS needed USG assistance to break loose this process. When the NCP disposed of the outstanding issues, he said, the SPLM would finally believe that the NCP is sincere about moving ahead.

¶ 15. (c) The SPLM as a party is in principle for national elections in 2010, Machar assured the SE. Decision on how to approach the elections had been a central topic of discussion in recent SPLM Political Bureau (PB) discussions, and different camps favored different options: allying with the NCP; conceding the Presidency to Bashir by not putting forward a SPLM candidate; or possibly forming an electoral coalition with the opposition. He predicted that the NCP would win the vote if allied with the SPLM, but otherwise it was difficult to see an NCP victory absent rigging. He said that there would soon be a conference of all non-NCP opposition parties, including the SPLM, to assess various positions and explore the possibility of forming an alternative alliance. The creation of an opposition bloc would depend upon CPA implementation and progress on Darfur, important issues very close for all the marginalized peoples of Sudan.

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Darfur

¶ 16. (sbu) Machar said that in the past the SPLM had tried to help on Darfur by calling rebel movements to Juba to discuss a common approach to peace talks and creation of a common front. SE Gration said that we would welcome a continued, deeper SPLM role in helping to resolve Darfur.

Money, Security and the LRA

¶ 17. (sbu) Machar admitted that the GOSS understood its serious problem in the area of finance. In the Political Bureau (PB) and other fora much of the discussion had focused on how to stem corruption at all levels of government. Some PB members had proposed granting the Anti-Corruption Commission prosecutorial authority and looked for means to strengthen the GOSS internal audit process. He repeated that the problems were serious and needed immediate attention.

Security

¶ 18. (c) He cited internal security problems as another major preoccupation for the GOSS. The police system inherited from the North was staffed by either inexperienced or over-the-hill officers not up to the job. Small arms proliferation was rampant, and porous borders had defeated efforts at disarmament. In addition, the population's fear that the weak police force could not protect them created resistance to disarmament attempts. He added that the North continued to funnel arms to civilian populations in the South to undermine the GOSS. He said that the resultant insecurity posed a major obstacle to any investment in South Sudan. He agreed with SE Gration that the GOSS needed to build institutions rather than buy tanks, since a South that was internally secure could repel any foreign aggression. A south wracked by internal violence, however, could neither

defend its border nor provide necessary services to its people.

LRA

¶9. (c) Machar admitted that he did not know where the LRA's Joseph Kony was currently located, although he suspected Western Equatoria. As a result of LRA depredations, many civilians had been displaced and Western Equatoria was no longer food self-sufficient. Machar praised a draft bill supported by Senator Kerry on disarmament and reconstruction in Northern Uganda and said that the entire region needed a peace rather than a war agenda. The SPLM had asked for others to regroup for peace, but many had not accepted. The best way to undermine Kony would be to persuade his followers that Kony's agenda was not in their interest and that they should disassociate themselves. Machar complained that the Acholi diaspora had repeatedly urged Kony not to sign the peace agreement brokered by the GOSS and said that convincing the diaspora that their cause is incompatible with Kony's aims would decrease Kony's popular support and turn the LRA conflict into a military issue that would be easier to solve. Machar said that he was still engaged in the LRA issue, but in a low-key manner.

¶10. (c) Comment. As always, Machar was expansive, congenial and articulate. Some of his statements, however, and especially those on corruption, run counter to allegations of impropriety that have dogged Machar since he first entered the GOSS. We have still not come across evidence that would support his claims that the North is actively funneling arms to civilian populations in the South, a stock SPLM talking point. .

WHITEHEAD